
Monsters of the Brain, Images of the Deity: Psychology and Religion in the Eighteenth Century

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It is easy to imagine, *how* by these means it comes to pass, that *men* worship the idols that have been set up in their minds; grow fond of the notions they have been long acquainted with there; and *stamp the characters of divinity, upon absurdities and errors*. . . . Whoever shall receive [borrowed principles] into his mind, and entertain them there, with the reverence usually paid to principles, never venturing to examine them . . . may take up from his education, and the fashions of his country, any absurdity for innate principles; and by long poring on the same objects, so dim his sight, as to take monsters lodged in his own brain, for the images of the Deity. (John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, 90)

It is safe to say that the psychology of religion, at least within departments of religious studies, is dead: seen as wrapped up in a mystifying and ideologically motivated liberal Protestantism turned secular humanism, the subfield represents everything that critically minded scholars wish to leave behind.¹ The demise of the psychology of religion has, perhaps unsurprisingly, coincided with an increasing suspicion about the concepts of “religion” and “mind” themselves. In religious studies, a flurry of “social constructionist” works have appeared in the past few decades that have argued that the category of religion is manufactured, distorting, and a conceptual anchor of im-

¹ This is not to say that there are not very prominent scholars of religion whose work could still be characterized as “psychological” in nature: see, for instance, Amy Hollywood, *Sensible Ecstasy: Mysticism, Sexual Difference, and the Demands of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Jeffrey Kripal, *Authors of the Impossible: The Paranormal and the Sacred* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010). My claim is simply that there exists a general suspicion in the field about seeing religion “in the head,” one that is responsible for the fact that these scholars do not call themselves “psychologists of religion”; see Russell T. McCutcheon, “Will Your Cognitive Anchor Hold in the Storms of Culture?,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 78, no. 4 (2010): 1188.

perialist and colonialist justificatory strategies.² The mind has been subject to the same social constructionist treatment³ but has received additional scorn from “eliminative materialists” in the philosophy of mind like Paul and Patricia Churchland and Daniel Dennett.⁴ In a sense, then, this article concerns the history of two entities that, in the opinion of a growing body of scholars, do not exist.⁵

Faced with the possible obsolescence of their object of inquiry, many scholars of religion have hoped to salvage the category by unmooring it from the sinking ship of the mind. Thus, for Hent de Vries, “So much is clear: beyond the modern definition of the concept, which has so often, and all too hastily, identified ‘religion’ with a ‘set of beliefs’—in any case, with a mental state or series of states of consciousness, whose content and mode could be described by propositions that map ideas onto the world (albeit an ideal or mythically past and future one)—an altogether different sense or set of senses of the term ought to be envisioned.”⁶ Throughout his work, Talal Asad has similarly pleaded for religious studies scholars to abandon the religion as “‘internal’ psychological state” model.⁷ Helpfully summarizing and extending his views, Saba Mahmood writes: “The concept of religion as belief is itself part of a normative secular framework in which religion is divested of its materiality. This normative framework not only secures an ideational and subjectivist concept of religion at the expense of its material entailments, but also fails to apprehend how modern religiosity (whether as belief in transcendence, political identity, or state ideology) is enabled and spawned by the secular institutions that have become more, rather than less, enmeshed in its formulation and praxis.”⁸ The lesson from all of these authors is, in brief, that we must free our-

² See nn. 18 and 26 for works that fall under the heading “the social construction of religion.” For a helpful defense of the category of religion against these claims, see Kevin Schilbrack, “Religions: Are There Any?,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 78, no. 4 (2010): 1112–38.

³ See Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la folie à l’âge classique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972); Nikolas Rose, *Inventing Our Selves: Psychology, Power, and Personhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

⁴ See Paul M. Churchland, *Matter and Consciousness: A Contemporary Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984); Patricia Churchland, *Neurophilosophy: Toward a Unified Science of the Mind/Brain* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989); Daniel Dennett, *Consciousness Explained* (New York: Little, Brown, 1991).

⁵ It should be noted that while the psychology of religion has disappeared in departments of religion, it continues to do quite well in departments of psychology: “The Psychology of Religion” is standard fare in many undergraduate psychology curricula, and Ralph W. Hood Jr., Peter C. Hill, and Bernard Spilka’s popular textbook *The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Approach*, originally published in 1996, is now in its fourth edition (New York: Guilford, 2009). Recently, studies emerging out of this tradition in the cognitive science and neuroscience of religion have begun to catch the attention of religious studies scholars, most of whom respond either with distanced wonder or swiftly dismissive accusations of reification.

⁶ Hent de Vries, “Introduction: Why Still ‘Religion’?,” in *Religion: Beyond a Concept*, ed. Hent de Vries (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 5.

⁷ Talal Asad, “Reading a Modern Classic: W. C. Smith’s *The Meaning and End of Religion*,” *History of Religions* 40, no. 3 (2001): 215.

⁸ Saba Mahmood, *Religious Difference in a Secular Age: A Minority Report* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 15.

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selves of the dominant and insidious tradition of thinking about religion that imagines it to be something “in the head.”⁹

For those who wish to transcend the “mentalist understanding” of religion, it is important to get clear about the process of conceptual evolution that produced it, if only to understand its tenacity.¹⁰ This, in brief, is what this essay seeks to accomplish. Its basic argument is that the practice of psychology appeared with its attendant object, the mind, in the eighteenth century, that it was constituted as a response to the problem of religion as it crystallized at the end of the seventeenth century, and that in being constituted it redefined its object of inquiry in its own terms. That the eighteenth century saw the flowering of new conceptions of interiority and religious expression is well known.¹¹ My specific claim here is that “religion” and the “mind” were not just related but *co-constituting* concepts and that the activity of their co-constitution is best called “psychology.” To restate my thesis: eighteenth-century *psychology*—a new kind of activity undergirded by new methodologies, subjects of inquiry, and institutions—created the modern concept of the *mind*—rent with emotional ambivalence, prone to projection and flights of the imagination, the fruit of a developmental process in which things can and do go awry—in response to the problem of *religion*, a phenomenon that in being studied psychologically *became* psychological. The “mind” that has traditionally dominated the study of religion was, in other words, *produced* by the study of religion. Its tyranny over thinking about religion is an immanent one.

The first section will briefly recapitulate the basics of the literature devoted to the genesis and nature of “religion” in its modern form, which crystallized at the end of the seventeenth century bearing two primary characteristics: *interiority* and *plurality*. Many scholars correctly see as a turning point here the work of John Locke, who believed “all the life and power of true religion consists in the inward and full persuasion of the mind” (interiority) and advocated for toleration of the “different professions of religion” (plurality).¹² The second section then argues that the formulation of theories of the mind in

⁹ McCutcheon, “Will Your Cognitive Anchor Hold in the Storms of Culture?,” 1188.

¹⁰ Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 29.

¹¹ Other works that investigate this nexus include Ann Taves, *Fits, Trances, and Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999); Christopher G. White, *Unsettled Minds: Psychology and the American Search for Spiritual Assurance, 1830–1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); Joanna Picciotto, *Labors of Innocence in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); Misty G. Anderson, *Imagining Methodism in 18th-Century Britain: Enthusiasm, Belief, and the Borders of the Self* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012); Sarah Rivett, *The Science of the Soul in Colonial New England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); and H. Newton Malony, *Religion in the History of Psychology* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2015).

¹² John Locke, “A Letter concerning Toleration,” in *The Works of John Locke*, vol. 5 (London: C. Baldwin, 1824), 11, 5. Locke’s, of course, was not the only doctrine of toleration and might “more accurately be characterized as a ‘tollerantismo,’ as an Italian critic put it, between Christian churches” (Jonathan I. Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man, 1670–1752* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006], 138).

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the eighteenth century found its primary impetus in the desire to understand in what sense religion was “interior” and how true religion could be distinguished from its false counterparts (superstition, enthusiasm, fanaticism, etc.). My hope is to demonstrate that a broad range of oftentimes opposed thinkers colluded in developing and popularizing psychological explanations of religion. The third section looks at two ways in which “the formation of psychologies consisted in a parallel constitution of psychologies and their objects of study,” to quote Sonu Shamdasani—two ways, in other words, in which religion, having provided the occasion for the development of theories of mind in the eighteenth century, was then remade in the image of those theories.¹³ Combining the claims of the second and third sections, thinking about “religion” and the “mind,” roughly as we understand these projects today, were co-constitutive developments that emerged together in the Enlightenment.¹⁴ The last section then justifies the label “psychology” for the activity of their co-constitution.

LONG PASTS, SHORT HISTORIES

Psychology has a long past, yet its real history is short. (Hermann Ebbinghaus)

In one sense, no doubt, psychology and religion are as old as western civilization itself: the Greeks had their gods, and they also had their theorists of mind and soul. There is even the famous Hippocratic text, dating from around 400 BC, *On the Sacred Disease*, devoted to refuting the idea that disorders like hysteria were divinely caused and to formulating a psychological account (the “ignorance and wonder” of *hoi polloi*) for this confused belief.¹⁵ Of course, the “naturalistic” explanation offered at the time for hysteria—that the uterus (*hystéra*) wandered around the abdomen—could have benefited from similar treatment. One Hippocratic text, itself screaming out for psychological explanation, claims simply that for women, “the womb is the cause of all diseases.”¹⁶

¹³ Sonu Shamdasani, “Psychologies as Ontology-Making Practices: William James and the Pluralities of Psychological Experience,” in *William James and the Varieties of Religious Experience: A Centenary Celebration*, ed. Jeremy Carrette (London: Routledge, 2005), 31.

¹⁴ This essay can be thought of as an expansion of Frank Manuel’s important insight that “English psychology was rooted not in any abstract scientific curiosity about the nature of man, but in a religious purpose of great moment” (Frank E. Manuel, *The Eighteenth Century Confronts the Gods* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959], 71).

¹⁵ Hippocrates, *On the Sacred Disease*, in *The Genuine Works of Hippocrates*, ed. Francis Adams, vol. 2 (London: Sydenham Society, 1849), 843.

¹⁶ Hippocrates, *Places in Man*, ed. Elizabeth M. Craik (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), 87. “The uterine origin of nervous diseases was not successfully challenged in England until the later seventeenth century, when Thomas Willis formulated the theory of the cerebral origin of hysteria and pioneered the science of neurology” (Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* [New York: Scribner’s, 1971], 13).

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A growing number of scholars have nonetheless come to believe that religion and psychology, rather than being transhistorical constants, are distinctively modern terms that gained their contemporary meaning around the same time and seemingly in response to the same historical events. In the case of religion, Wilfred Cantwell Smith was the first to argue for its historical specificity in the “modern classic,” *The Meaning and End of Religion*.¹⁷ Smith’s narrative has been challenged in a number of ways,¹⁸ but his basic thesis that religion is a modern category, one that “reflected, and served, the clash of conflicting religious parties, the emergence of a triumphant intellectualism, and the emerging new information from beyond the seas about patterns of other men’s religious life,” is today hegemonic for any “critical”

¹⁷ See Asad, “Reading a Modern Classic.” Taking us on a whirlwind tour of the history of the term “religion” in the book’s second chapter, Smith contends that the Latin *religio*, as it was used roughly up until the Enlightenment, “referred to something personal, inner, and transcendently oriented,” akin to our modern conception of “piety.” Only in the seventeenth century do we begin to find the concept “religion” representing an “intellectualist and impersonal schematization of things,” a *system* whose propositions are *believed* to be true or false; see Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 40. One nonetheless finds outlying hints in the direction of “a new idea of religion, a great objective something” in Cicero and Lucretius, and the “arresting” distinctions between *nostra* and *vestra religio*, as well as *vera* and *falsa religio*, in the works of early Christian apologists like Arnobius and Lactantius (*ibid.*, 22, 27). In the pagan-Christian polemics of the fourth century, Smith finds the closest approximation to the modern conception of religion and tentatively proposes that there is a “correlation between the frequency of usage of this word [*religio*] and the historical situation of religious pluralism and rivalry” (*ibid.*, 24–25); for an extension of this line of thought, see Daniel Boyarin, “The Christian Invention of Judaism: The Theodosian Empire and the Rabbinic Refusal of Religion,” *Representations* 85, no. 1 (2004): 21–57. For the most part, however, *religio* was used up until the seventeenth century to indicate a pious comportment. Smith thus suggests that we translate Augustine’s *De vera religione* as “On Proper Piety,” the Swiss reformer Ulrich Zwingli’s *De vera et falsa religione commentarius* as *An Essay on Genuine and Spurious Piety*, and Calvin’s *Christianae religionis institutio* as *Grounding in Christian Piety* (Smith, *Meaning and End of Religion*, 29, 37).

¹⁸ For other conceptual histories of religion, see Michel Despland, *La Religion en Occident: Évolution des idées et du vécu* (Montreal: Fides, 1979); John Bossy, “Some Elementary Forms of Durkheim,” *Past & Present* 95 (May 1982): 3–18; Peter Biller, “Words and the Medieval Notion of ‘Religion,’” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36, no. 3 (1985): 351–69; Ernst Feil, *Religio*, 4 vols. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986–2012); Peter Harrison, “Religion” and the Religions in the English Enlightenment (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); S. N. Balagangadhara, “The Heathen in His Blindness . . .”: *Asia, The West, and the Dynamic of Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 1994); Jonathan Z. Smith, “Religion, Religions, Religious,” in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Post-colonial Theory, India, and “the Mystic East”* (London: Routledge, 1999), chap. 2; Paul Griffiths, “The Very Idea of Religion,” *First Things* 103 (May 2000): 30–35; Catherine Bell, “Paradigms behind (and before) the Modern Concept of Religion,” *History and Theory* 45, no. 4 (2006): 27–46; William Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), chap. 2; Guy Stroumsa, *A New Science: The Discovery of Religion in the Age of Reason* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); Brent Nongbri, *Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013). For theoretical objections to Smith’s project, specifically to his view that the modern understanding of religion ought to be abandoned, see E. H. Pyle, “In Defence of ‘Religion,’” *Religious Studies* 3, no. 1 (1967): 347–53; Eric J. Sharpe, “Dialogue and Faith,” *Religion* 3, no. 2 (1973): 89–105; Donald Wiebe, “The Role of ‘Belief’ in the Study of Religion: A Response to W. C. Smith,” *Numen* 26, no. 2 (1979): 234–49.

scholar of religion.¹⁹ William Cavanaugh helpfully summarizes the lesson here in four points: as opposed to the ancient and medieval *religio*, “religion in modernity indicates a universal genus of which the various religions are species; each religion comes to be demarcated by a system of propositions; religion is identified with an essentially interior, private impulse; and religion comes to be seen as essentially distinct from secular pursuits such as politics, economics, and the like.”²⁰ In Cavanaugh’s telling, Renaissance thinkers like Nicholas of Cusa and Marsilio Ficino inaugurated this conceptual transformation by interiorizing religion “as a natural, innate impulse of the heart” (point 3).²¹ It was in the sixteenth century that a new understanding of the *saeculum* as having “autonomy from a religious realm” was proffered (point 4), and then in the seventeenth that the “idea of religions in the plural,” of which Christianity is one (point 1), began to be used to indicate “abstract systems of doctrine” rather than “styles of worship” (point 2).²² This development is complete by the time of John Locke, who “draws a distinction between the ‘outward force’ used by the civil magistrate and the ‘inward persuasion’ of religion,” and who thus conveniently marks the dawn of the modern episteme of “religion.”²³ John Bossy, Craig Martin, and Brent Nongbri attribute a similarly solidifying role to Locke, a figure to whom I will return shortly.²⁴

This article will focus on two features of the modern concept of religion, *interiority* and *plurality*, both of which deserve some preliminary commentary. First, to say that religion became “interiorized” at the dawn of modernity is not necessarily to succumb to a straightforward narrative of disenchantment, wherein the mind comes to serve as the enchanted repository for all that is drained out of the world (though the theory of projection that was revived in the eighteenth century gives expression to the prevalence of this view).²⁵ Religion was not something totally interior by the eighteenth century, but interiority was something with which you had to grapple if you wanted to be religious or to understand religion. In any event, it is less interiority as private sanctum than the mind as a pressing *problem* that is of interest here. Second, regarding plurality: though religion proved to be a remarkably inadequate category for making sense of the “vast world . . . discovered outside of Christendom,”²⁶ it was a notion through which Europeans attempted to engage

¹⁹ Smith, *Meaning and End of Religion*, 44.

²⁰ Cavanaugh, *Myth of Religious Violence*, 69.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 71.

²² *Ibid.*, 74.

²³ *Ibid.*, 78.

²⁴ Bossy, “Some Elementary Forms,” 14–16; Craig Martin, *Masking Hegemony: A Genealogy of Liberalism, Religion and the Private Sphere* (London: Equinox, 2010), chap. 3; Nongbri, *Before Religion*, 101–4. Thanks to Nathan Ristuccia for this tip regarding Locke.

²⁵ See Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2007), 29–30.

²⁶ For a representative smattering, see David Chidester, *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1996); Russell T. McCutcheon, *Manufacturing Religion: The Discourse on Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia*

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not simply with a difference in degree but with a “difference in *kind*, a difference that was essential rather than accidental.”²⁷ As religions, the ways of other people could be understood—and I emphasize the conditional—neither as heresy, as a falling away from the truth, nor even as different forms of pious comportment toward God, but rather as involving radically foreign systems of thought, as involving real *difference*.²⁸

These two features of religion²⁹ established particular problematics that oriented eighteenth-century thought. In the case of interiority, questions that naturally followed from this understanding of religion included: What are the contours of this interiority? Does religion belong to a particular part of this interiority—the heart, for instance? Can’t our interior lives go astray? If so, what does this mean for religion? How do we distinguish the “true” expressions of inner religiosity from their “false” doubles? How does interiority prevent us from being truly religious? And in the case of plurality: What is the nature of the difference between religions? Is it a surmountable difference? Is it an innate or acquired difference? Is there a common ethical or doctrinal core of the religions? If not, what is the common feature that allows us to call them religions?

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Like religion, psychology is often imagined “transhistorically,” as a mode of inquiry as old as the human mind itself. Aristotle’s *On the Soul* (*Perì psychês*) seems to be clear evidence that psychology is indeed a very old project, but

(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); King, *Orientalism and Religion*; Timothy Fitzgerald, *The Ideology of Religious Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Derek R. Peterson and Darren R. Walhof, eds., *The Invention of Religion: Rethinking Belief in Politics and History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002); Daniel Dubuisson, *The Western Construction of Religion: Myths, Knowledge, and Ideology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions; or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Cavanaugh, *Myth of Religious Violence*.

²⁷ J. Samuel Preus, *Explaining Religion: Criticism and Theory from Bodin to Freud* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), 3; Jonathan Z. Smith, “Do the Rite Thing” (presentation, University of Chicago, January 11, 2012), <https://vimeo.com/35376515>.

²⁸ For the importance of this problematic on Locke, see Daniel Carey, *Locke, Shaftesbury, and Hutcheson: Contesting Diversity in the Enlightenment and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), chaps. 1–3.

²⁹ To admit my biases from the outset, I take these two features of modern “religion” to be real accomplishments: in addition to serving the very political demand to demarcate nonpolitical spheres, to distorting our understanding of premodern forms of life, and to disastrously arming missionaries, administrators, and traders with a tool with which to actively misunderstand indigenous peoples to the ends of domination and exploitation, the concept of religion also furnished us with the possibilities that (a) much of what we take to be “out there” is actually “in here” and (b) “they” are not less than but simply different from “us.” I am not claiming that these possibilities were realized in any particularly praiseworthy form, only affirming the interiority and plurality of religion as *theoretical* achievements. I thus understand “religion” much as Marx understood “freedom:” that is, as an ideological product of modernity made unrealizable and dangerous by the very social structures that gave rise to it.

as Georges Canguilhem pointed out, “the science of the soul is a province of physiology” for Aristotle and not at all an independent branch of study.³⁰ According to François Lapointe, “the word ‘psychology’ is composed of Greek elements, but it is not Greek.”³¹ It is only in the sixteenth century that one first finds reference to *psychologia*, and the first books of “psychology” belonged essentially to the Aristotelian *scientia de anima*.³² Up until the seventeenth century, psychology continued to be a “generic science of the living being,” which involved an examination of “living creatures in their corporeal functions . . . as well as their spiritual operations, which were the domain of the rational soul.”³³ In dismissing the sensitive and vegetative souls, and opposing the one active, intellective soul to a passive, mechanical body, René Descartes set the stage for a reorientation of psychology as a science of a “thinking thing.” As the scholastic edifice came tumbling down, a new vision of human interiority began to take root in the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries that divorced thinking and understanding from the divinely accorded soul and emphasized instead the importance of *experience* as the root of knowledge.

This environment was a predictably fertile ground for the cultivation of both old and new theories about the vicissitudes of mental life, but there was one particular problem that often served as the impetus for their development. According to Peter Harrison, “the fragmentation of Christendom led to a change from an institutionally based understanding of exclusive salvation to a propositionally based understanding. Formerly it had been ‘no salvation outside the Church.’ Now, it had become ‘no salvation without the profession of the “true religion.”’ But which religion was the true religion?”³⁴ In what follows, I will look at a few thinkers who turned to psychological theories to the answer this basic question. The problematic of the “interiority” of religion, and specifically the problem of how to separate the “true” from the “false” there, often provided the itch that speculation about the mind’s workings attempted to scratch.

One ancient inheritance that found fresh formulation in the eighteenth century was the “projection” theory, first articulated in a series of fragments of Xenophanes, the last of which sardonically notes that Ethiopian gods are

³⁰ Georges Canguilhem, “Qu’est-ce que la psychologie?,” *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 63, no. 1 (1958): 15. Hilary Putnam also makes this point in “How Old Is the Mind?,” in *Words and Life*, ed. James Conant (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 4.

³¹ François H. Lapointe, “Who Originated the Term ‘Psychology’?,” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 8, no. 3 (1872): 329. Even A. A. Long, who rejects the idea that there is a “cognitive chasm between ourselves and the ancient philosophers,” admits that Greek ideas about the mind and the self must be “translated” “into a metaphorical mode” in order to “provide us with insights into our own potentialities” (*Greek Models of Mind and Self* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015], 12).

³² Fernando Vidal, *Sciences of the Soul: The Early Modern Origins of Psychology*, trans. Saskia Brown (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 47.

³³ *Ibid.*, 61.

³⁴ Harrison, “*Religion*” and the Religions in the English Enlightenment, 63.

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“snub-nosed and black” while Thracian gods are “blue-eyed and red-haired.”³⁵ In *De l'origine des fables*, Bernard Fontenelle extends the theory to a people's ideas in addition to their physical characteristics while suggesting that projection is universal and progressive:

Cicero said somewhere that he would have liked it better if Homer had transferred the qualities of the gods to men, rather than transferring as he did the qualities of men to the gods. But Cicero asked too much of him: that which he called in his day the qualities of the gods were not at all familiar in Homer's time. The pagans always modeled their divinities after themselves: thus, as men were perfected, so too did the gods become better. The first men are strong brutes and give their all to force; their gods will be almost as brutal, and only a little more powerful. These are the gods of Homer. When men begin to have ideas about wisdom and justice, the gods begin to be wise and just, increasingly in proportion to the ideas perfected among men. These are the gods of Cicero, worth much more than those of Homer because better philosophers had gotten hold of them.³⁶

Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third earl of Shaftesbury, adapted the theory to account for emotional imbalance, similarly projected under the influence of the “the melancholy way in which we have been taught Religion,” which makes us unfit to “calmly examine the Temper of our own Mind and Passions.” According to Shaftesbury, it is in this unstable state that “we see Wrath, and Fury, and Revenge, and Terrors *in the Deity*; when we are full of Disturbances and Fears *within*, and have, by Sufferance and Anxiety, lost so much of the natural Calm and Easiness of our Temper.”³⁷ To counter this “devout melancholy” (Shaftesbury's definition of religious enthusiasm), he counseled “good humour” as “not only the best Security against *Enthusiasm*, but the best Foundation of *Piety* and *true Religion*.”³⁸

Others similarly attempted to answer the question as to why it is that the divine is cloaked with human characteristics and emotions. For Giambattista Vico, the “tendency of our nature by which man conceives of all external bodies as animated by a life analogous to his own” is a function of a prolonged infantile narcissism, “which disposes men in general to form exaggerated ideas of their own importance and power.”³⁹ For the deist John Trenchard, the tendency “to mistake the Phantasms and Images of our own Brains (which have no existence anywhere else) for real Beings” is an effect of a diminished

³⁵ Xenophanes of Colophon, *Fragments, a Text and Translation with a Commentary* by J. H. Lesher (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 25.

³⁶ Bernard Fontenelle, *De l'origine des fables*, in *Oeuvres de Fontenelle*, vol. 4 (Paris: Salmon, 1825), 299.

³⁷ Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third earl of Shaftesbury, “A Letter concerning Enthusiasm,” in *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, and Times*, vol. 1 (Birmingham: John Baskerville, 1773), 32–33.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.

³⁹ Quoted in Stewart Elliott Guthrie, *Faces in the Clouds: A New Theory of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 66.

grasp on external reality.⁴⁰ As he explains, “extatick Fits and Trances,” the kind responsible for claims of “personal communication with God and the Holy Trinity,” “must necessarily happen when the Organs of Sense (which are the Avenues and Doors to let in external Objects) are shut and locked up by Sleep, Distempers, or strong Prejudices, that the imaginations produced from inward Causes must reign without Rival, for the Images within us striking strongly upon, and affecting the Brain, Spirits, or Organ, and all Objects from without, being wholly, or in a great measure shut out and excluded, so as to give no information or assistance, we must unavoidably submit to an evidence which meets no contradiction, and take things as they appear.”⁴¹ David Hartley similarly understood enthusiasm, wherein “reality and certainty [are given] to all the reverie’s of a man’s own mind,” as the fruit of “strong fancies, little experience in divine things, and narrow understandings, (and especially where the moral sense, and the scrupulosity attending its growth and improvement, are but imperfectly formed).”⁴² The problem of separating true and false religion thus not only revived the thesis that the mind tends to project its inner features outward but also spurred speculation about the psychological reasons for projection.

Closely related to the projection theory was the view that the gods were born of fear, which, though already revived in Spinoza and Hobbes, also found new expression, and in new forms. André-François Bourreau-Deslandes repurposed the fear theory to make sense of inequality between the sexes: in his view, the “dread and ignorance” at the root of all religion “long ago locked woman into an inescapably inferior position.”⁴³ Rivaling the deists for Bishop Warburton’s ire,⁴⁴ Hume also extended the fear theory in borrowing from his

⁴⁰ John Trenchard, *The Natural History of Superstition* (London: A. Baldwin, 1709), 11.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 12–13. Turning the tables on the deists, Bishop Warburton characterized those who would make religion into a “*divine philosophy in the mind*” as being themselves “apt . . . to fly out into *enthusiasm*,” unmoored by the “outward acts” of religious ritual (William Warburton, “The Alliance between Church and State,” in *The Works of the Right Reverend William Warburton, Lord Bishop of Gloucester*, vol. 4 [London: John Nichols, 1788], 50, 52). Like many others, Warburton contrasted this enthusiasm with superstition: “Now, as meditations, not tempered with these outward acts, are apt, as we have shewn, to fly out into *enthusiasm*; so outward acts not regulated by, nor adapted to those meditations, are as subject to degenerate into a childish unmeaning *superstition*” (*ibid.*, 52). Warburton treats the subject of the imagination, “this faculty of the mind, the nurse and parent of enthusiasm,” in “The Doctrine of Grace,” in *The Works of the Right Reverend William Warburton, Lord Bishop of Gloucester*, vol. 8 (London: Luke Hansard & Sons, 1811), 257–61.

⁴² David Hartley, *Observations on Man, His Frame, His Duty, and His Expectations* (London: Thomas Tegg & Son, 1834), 307.

⁴³ Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, 584–85.

⁴⁴ See n. 41 for Warburton’s critique of the deists. William Warburton chastised Hume, among other things, for pathologizing fear and love, and in so doing presented a battle over the boundaries of true religion as one over the nature of the mind: “whenever simple nature did not work by *fear* and *love*, to avoid evil and to follow good, but instead of that to invent a *fantastic*, or a *diabolical* deity, the impediment was accidental, occasioned by the intervention of some unhappy circumstance foreign to the natural workings of the human mind” (“Remarks on Mr. David Hume’s *Essay on the Natural History of Religion*,” in *The Works of the Right Reverend William Warburton, Lord Bishop of Gloucester*, vol. 7 [London: John Nichols, 1788], 880–81).

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Dissertation of the Passions, where he develops a theory of the coupling of opposing passions. Hume understood religious feeling there as anchored in “ordinary affections of human life” that keep us tautly suspended between fear and hope: “the anxious concern for happiness, the dread of future misery, the terror of death, the thirst for revenge, the appetite for food and other necessaries. Agitated by hopes and fears of this nature, especially the latter, men scrutinize, with a trembling curiosity, the course of future causes, and examine the various and contrary events of human life. And in this disordered scene, with eyes still more disordered and astonished, they see the first obscure traces of divinity.”⁴⁵ In addition to being recast as a theory of ambivalence, the fear theory was also couched in developmental terms: combining the views of his predecessors to furnish a many-pronged critique of religion in general, Baron d’Holbach attributed the founding of religion to a time when human beings existed in a state of infancy, when the human mind was “a soft wax, able to receive all the impressions one wishes to make on it.”⁴⁶ The primary impressions received during this time were those of fear, and “when one is fearful, one ceases to reason. . . . When the brain is troubled, one believes everything and examines nothing.”⁴⁷ Many eighteenth-century philosophers shared this basic developmental framework, in which infancy, primitivism, and madness were problematically blended.

To be clear, it was not just the acerbic critics of religion who turned to psychological theories to make sense of false religion (or, for d’Holbach, religion in general).⁴⁸ As John Redwood explains, “even the stauncher de-

⁴⁵ David Hume, *Dialogues and Natural History of Religion*, ed. John Charles Addison Gaskin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 140; Manuel, *The Eighteenth Century Confronts the Gods*, 177. The advantage of Hume’s theory of coupled opposing passions lay in its ability to explain contradictory religious manifestations: thus, both the flux and reflux of polytheism and theism and the simultaneous adulation and terror associated with divinity are chalked up to the contradictory nature of the animating projection (Hume, *Dialogues*, 160, 177). Hume is also interesting for having developed not simply a psychological theory of religion but also a theory of the psychological effects of theistic religion: whereas polytheists are free outwardly to praise the gods and inwardly to deny their existence, theists, believing that an omnipotent God can see “even the most inmost recesses of the breast,” must display piety even inwardly; they thus must deceive not only others but themselves as well (*ibid.*, 178).

⁴⁶ Paul Henry Thiry, Baron d’Holbach, *Le Bon Sens* (Paris: Librairie anti-cléricale, 1881), 31.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 17. Representing the general views of the “Bowood Group,” Jeremy Bentham also offers a developmental take on false religion: denouncing “the torpid superstition which benumbs all the faculties of the soul,” he asserts that “a man who after reading the scriptures can bring himself to fancy the doctrines of the Athanasian Creed” exists “in a state of prepared imbecility which is necessary to a mind for the tranquil reception of one parcel of Nonsense” (quoted in M. P. Mack, *Jeremy Bentham: An Odyssey of Ideas* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1963], 300).

⁴⁸ It is worth mentioning here that it was common for religious instruction manuals in the eighteenth century to frame their project in vaguely Lockean terms. Take, for instance, the central question of Henry Crossman’s advice for teaching “young persons”: “Of the two great Ordinances of Christianity, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, how does the former imprint upon the *rasa Tabula* of our infant Minds the most significant Emblems of Purity and Holiness, and lay the strongest Obligations upon us to keep ourselves from those Pollutions which deface the Divine Image and deprave the Dignity of our Nature?” (*An Introduction to the Belief*

fendants of the faith had imbibed a [new] theory of man and his motives.”⁴⁹ Defending himself against the charge of enthusiasm, John Wesley warned against confusing this “madness” that “has religion for its object” with religion itself, which is always “the spirit of a sound mind.”⁵⁰ According to Misty Anderson, though “heart religion” in general was seen as “both a threat to and the fascinating possibility of release from the tyranny of the ‘I,’” and thus a challenge to the secularizing vector of the Enlightenment, it also “brought the discussion about modern Lockean psychology to general audiences and encouraged them to talk, think, and write about both their evangelical transformation and their experience of their inward state.”⁵¹ Across the ocean, the Congregationalist ministers Charles Chauncy and Jonathan Edwards, despite opposed views on the First Great Awakening, were also both formulating psychological explanations of false religion.⁵² For Chauncy, “the enthusiast mistakes the workings of his own passions for divine communications, and fancies himself immediately inspired by the Spirit of God, when all the while, he

and Practice of the True Religion [London: J. and W. Oliver, 1769], 29). Or the aim of Anna Letitia Barbauld’s *Hymns in Prose for Children*: “The peculiar design of this publication is, to impress devotional feelings as early as possible on the infant mind; fully convinced as the author is, that they cannot be impressed too soon, and that a child, to feel the full force of the idea of God, ought never to remember the time when he had no such idea” (*Hymns in Prose for Children* [London: J. Johnson, 1794], v).

⁴⁹ John Redwood, *Reason, Ridicule, and Religion: The Age of Enlightenment in England, 1660–1750* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 139. See also Sheridan Gilley, “Christianity and Enlightenment: An Historical Survey,” *History of European Ideas* 1, no. 2 (1981): 103–21. Redwood is speaking of England here, but his statement is also true of France in the first half of the eighteenth century as well: Claude Buffier, for instance, a Jesuit leader of the “Theological Enlightenment” in France, “re-defined original sin as a kind of originally self-imposed dementia now binding on all descendants of Adam” (Jeffrey D. Burson, *The Rise and Fall of Theological Enlightenment: Jean-Martin de Prades and Ideological Polarization in Eighteenth-Century France* [Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010], 68). According to Burson, Buffier’s “psychopathology” of sin was commonplace in France before the Prades affair: “The very Lockean dictum that human understanding derives from sense perception became, for many theologians and apologists in the first half of the eighteenth century, tantamount to a description of why humanity remains hopelessly prone to moral and intellectual corruption” (*ibid.*, 68–69).

⁵⁰ John Wesley, “Sermon XXXVII: The Nature of Enthusiasm,” in *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, vol. 5 (London: John Mason, 1829), 470. Wesley defines madness in precisely the same terms as Locke: “[Enthusiasm] may well be accounted a species of madness; of madness rather than folly: Seeing a fool is properly one who draws wrong conclusions from right premises; whereas a madman draws right conclusions, but from wrong premises” (*ibid.*, 469). Despite often challenging the medical treatment of madness, Wesley wrote a book on *Primitive Physick* in which he recommended basic cures for “lunacy” and “raging madness” (John Wesley, *Primitive Physick, or an Easy and Natural Method of Curing Most Diseases* [Philadelphia: Joseph Cruikshank, 1770], 53–54). He also included among his “few plain easy Rules” a warning about “violent and sudden passions,” which “have a greater Influence on Health than most People are aware of” (*ibid.*, xiii, xv). I thus disagree with Ann Taves that Wesley was not interested in the project of using “psychological criteria” to distinguish true and false religion; see Taves, *Fits, Trances, and Visions*, 56.

⁵¹ Anderson, *Imagining Methodism in 18th-Century Britain*, 3–4.

⁵² See Taves, *Fits, Trances, and Visions*, 21–41.

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is under no other influence than that of an over-heated imagination.”⁵³ Edwards, by contrast, seeking “to defend the central importance of the affections against those who would eliminate them from religion” while also providing “criteria for testing them lest religion degenerate into emotional fanaticism and false enthusiasm,” distinguished the influence of the imagination, Satan’s greatest plaything, from that of the Holy Spirit working through us.⁵⁴ The imagination played a central role in many psychological theories of religion in the eighteenth century.

This brief review of Enlightenment psychologies of religion is sufficient to demonstrate that a wide range of oftentimes-opposed thinkers turned to the strange workings of the mind in order to explain “superstition”⁵⁵ and “enthusiasm,”⁵⁶ the two commonly invoked poles between which the ter-

⁵³ Charles Chauncy, “Enthusiasm Described and Caution’d Against,” in *The Great Awakening: Documents Illustrating the Crisis and Its Consequences*, ed. Alan Heimert and Perry Miller (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1967), 231, quoted in Taves, *Fits, Trances, and Visions*, 23.

⁵⁴ *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 2, *Religious Affections*, ed. John E. Smith (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 17, 288. Daniel Defoe, whom Edwards read, makes a similar move in his *Essay on the History and Reality of Apparitions*, where he distinguishes the reality of the invisible world from productions of the imagination. Most interesting for my present purposes are Defoe’s thoughts on *conscience*, “a frightful Apparition itself,” which “works upon the Imagination with an invincible Force; like Faith, it makes a Man view things that are not, as if they were; feel things that are not to be felt, see things that are not to be seen, and hear things that are not to be heard; it commands the Senses, nay even the Tongue it self, which is so little under Command, submits to this sovereign Mandate; and tho’ I do not see that Conscience always overrules it to Silence, yet it often makes it speak, even whether it would or no, and that to its own Ruin and Destruction” (*An Essay on the History and Reality of Apparitions: being an Account of what they are, and what they are not; whence they come, and whence they come not, as also How we may distinguish between the Apparitions of Good and Evil Spirits, and How we ought to Behave to them with a great Variety of Surprising and Diverting Examples, never Publish’d before* [London: J. Roberts, 1727], 100–101).

⁵⁵ According to Euan Cameron, “the seventeenth century witnessed a crucial transition in the whole debate over what ‘superstitions’ were and why they were to be avoided, because what had previously been agreed between the disputants now became a controversial and open field of speculation” (*Enchanted Europe: Superstition, Reason, and Religion, 1250–1750* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010], 242). Briefly, the transformation can be characterized as follows: whereas before the seventeenth century superstition referred to that which was *caused by* demons, after it came to signify *belief in* demons. This development “prepared the way for the characteristic use of the term ‘superstition’ associated with the Enlightenment. . . . Consequently wrong belief was located in human folly and ignorance, absolutely not—as for the developed Reformation critique—in demonic deception” (*ibid.*, 244). Wouter J. Hanegraaff emphasizes that with this transformation, superstition became less about sin than *mental error*, thus setting the stage for a psychological investigation of its source (*Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012], 163). For other histories of modern superstition, see Philip Shorr, *Science and Superstition in the Eighteenth Century: A Study of the Treatment of Science in Two Encyclopedias of 1725–1750: Chambers’ Cyclopaedia: London (1728); Zedler’s Universal Lexicon: Leipzig (1732–1750)* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932); Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150–1750* (New York: Zone Books, 1998), chap. 9; Bernard Dompnier, ed., *La superstition à l’âge des lumières* (Paris: Champion, 1998).

⁵⁶ As Michael Heyd has demonstrated, a wide range of seventeenth-century Protestant theologians adopted medical rather than theological explanations of enthusiasm, and “in designating religious eccentrics and non-conformists as ‘mentally sick,’ the critics of enthusiasm imperceptibly redefined religious orthodoxy in medical terms of health and mental balance, rather than, or at least, side by side with, theological terms of correct faith” (“*Be Sober and Rea-*

rain of false religion was delimited.⁵⁷ Both friends (false or not) and avowed enemies of religion, in increasingly privileging natural over supernatural explanations not only of religious superstition and enthusiasm but also of witchcraft, demon possession, and melancholia,⁵⁸ unwittingly worked together to spread and refine views of the mind's tendencies, capacities, and excesses. This strange collusion⁵⁹ was the fruit of their common task of distinguishing true from false religion, but it is also notable that many of the deists, *philosophes*, and Protestant luminaries mentioned thus far also shared a grounding in Lockean epistemology.⁶⁰ In *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, Locke deployed terms like "self," "consciousness," and "self-consciousness" to de-

sonable": *The Critique of Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries* [Leiden: Brill, 1995], 10). Michael MacDonald also makes this claim in "Insanity and the Realities of History in Early Modern England," *Psychological Medicine* 11, no. 1 (1981): 11–25. The eighteenth-century critique of enthusiasm was thus unique not for turning to natural explanations but rather for reinforcing this approach "along psychological lines," that is, in terms of a new understanding of the *mind* (George Rosen, "Enthusiasm: 'a dark lanthorn of the spirit,'" *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 42, no. 5 [1968]: 418). For other histories of modern enthusiasm, see *ibid.*, 393–421; Susie I. Tucker, *Enthusiasm: A Study in Semantic Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972); Hillel Schwartz, *Knaves, Fools, Madmen, and That Subtile Effluviium: A Study of the Opposition to the French Prophets, 1706–1710* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1978); Clement Hawes, *Mania and Literary Style: The Rhetoric of Enthusiasm from the Ranters to Christopher Smart* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Lawrence E. Klein and Anthony J. La Vopa, eds., *Enthusiasm and Enlightenment in Europe, 1650–1850* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1997), 1–203; Shaun Irlam, *Elations: The Poetics of Enthusiasm in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999); Jon Mee, *Romanticism, Enthusiasm, and Regulation: Poetics and the Policing of Culture in the Romantic Period* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Amy Hollywood, "Enthusiasm," in *Frequencies: A Collaborative Genealogy of Spirituality*, September 1, 2011, <http://frequencies.ssrc.org/2011/09/01/enthusiasm/>; Jordana Rosenberg, *Critical Enthusiasm: Capital Accumulation and the Transformation of Religious Passion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Adam Stern, "Political Quixoticism," *Journal of Religion* 95, no. 2 (2015): 224–30. The classic study of the enthusiasts themselves is R. A. Knox, *Enthusiasm: A Chapter in the History of Religion with Special Reference to the XVII and XVIII Centuries* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994).

⁵⁷ For attempts to distinguish between superstition and enthusiasm, see Joseph Addison, "Devotion-Enthusiasm," in *The Spectator*, 6 vols. (London: Andrew Wilson, 1812), 2:258–61; Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Notes on English Divines*, 2 vols., ed. Derwent Coleridge (London: Edward Moxon, 1853), 2:39–40; David Hume, "Of Superstition and Enthusiasm," in *Writings on Religion*, ed. Antony Flew (Chicago: Open Court, 1992), 3–9; Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Bounds of Mere Reason*, trans. and ed. Allen Wood and George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 169–70. Locke distinguished between enthusiasm as a "strong and firme perswasion" and superstition as the "attempt to placate God by ritual observance" in an unpublished manuscript described by John Marshall in *John Locke: Resistance, Religion and Responsibility* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 149–50.

⁵⁸ On changing responses to witchcraft, demon possession, and melancholia, see Redwood, *Reason, Ridicule, and Religion*, chap. 6; Andrew Scull, *Madness in Civilization: A Cultural History of Insanity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), chap. 4; George Makari, *Soul Machine: The Invention of the Modern Mind* (New York: Norton, 2015), chap. 3.

⁵⁹ Sarah Rivett calls it "an intricate process of borrowing" (*Science of the Soul*, 12).

⁶⁰ "Everyone conceded the range and power of human intelligence. On this point the orthodox and the heretics were agreed; both conceived themselves loyal disciples of John Locke" (Gerald R. Cragg, *Reason and Authority in the Eighteenth Century* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964], 93).

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scribe an interior life acquired through experience,⁶¹ one in which moral and religious ideas are not innate, in which “uneasiness” and “the imagination” play leading parts, and which is generally “prone to error, breakage, and decay.”⁶² Deists like John Toland and Matthew Tindal made a “great show” of adopting Lockean principles,⁶³ and in France, Locke’s conception of the mind found an early exponent in Voltaire⁶⁴ and, stripped of its innate abilities, was the basis for the sensationalism of Étienne Bonnot de Condillac and Claude Adrien Helvétius.⁶⁵ Applying “Mr. Locke’s idea to the false reli-

⁶¹ See bk. 2, chap. 27 of Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, 296–314. For other accounts of the historical specificity of the modern mind that see Locke as the turning point, see Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), chap. 9; Raymond Martin and John Barresi, *Naturalization of the Soul: Self and Personal Identity in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2004), chap. 1; Jerrold Seigel, *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe since the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), chap. 3; Makari, *Soul Machine*, chaps. 5–6.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 115, 118.

⁶³ Harrison, “Religion” and the Religions in the English Enlightenment, 62.

⁶⁴ The thirteenth of his *Philosophical Letters* from 1734 is devoted to “Mr. Locke”; Voltaire, *Philosophical Letters, or Letters Regarding the English Nation*, trans. Prudence L. Steiner, ed. John Leigh (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2007). Though Locke’s ally Jean Le Clerc had circulated his work in the Netherlands as early as 1688, “Locke’s *Essay* remained largely unknown on the continent during the first third of the eighteenth century” (Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650–1750* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001], 478). I do not mean here to reaffirm the thesis that French Anglomania was the decisive factor for the Enlightenment, so despised by Israel, only to demonstrate that Locke’s work, which was of course very influential after Voltaire’s endorsement, offered both the problem and the terms for solving it (*ibid.*, 522–23). That being said, Israel goes too far in delimiting Locke’s influence, even within the mainstream moderate Enlightenment: the “two authors who [for Israel] most effectively summed up the radical thought of the early Enlightenment era,” La Mettrie and Diderot, far from being “anti-Lockean,” both regarded Locke’s work as undergirding their own (*ibid.*, 704, 706). Taking him “to have believed in a material soul,” La Mettrie claimed that Locke was “the first to give us true principles by relating things to their first origin” (*Oeuvres philosophiques de La Mettrie* [Paris: Charles Tutot, 1796], 256–57). And Locke is praised in the *Encyclopédie*, though Israel claims this is only because “the predominant tone and ideology of the vast enterprise had to correspond ostensibly to the guidelines of the moderate mainstream Enlightenment” (*Radical Enlightenment*, 711). It is difficult to believe that these thinkers could have been so consistently and systematically duplicitous in their treatment of Locke (see also Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, 367).

⁶⁵ Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, *Traité des sensations et des animaux*, in *Oeuvres complètes de Condillac*, vol. 3 (Paris: Lecointe et Durey, 1822), 37–310; Claude Adrien Helvétius, *De l’esprit* (Paris: Durand, 1758). Locke’s work simultaneously became more and less Christian when it crossed the Channel: Locke’s translator, Pierre Coste, apologetically rendered “mind” as either *âme* or *esprit*, and consciousness as *conscience*, erasing the soul/mind distinction so important to Locke himself. At the same time, thanks to a radicalization of his thinking matter hypothesis, “Locke became a materialist despite himself” (Paul Hazard, *La crise de la conscience européenne, 1680–1715* [Paris: Fayard, 1961], 231). For Locke’s materialist reception in France, see John W. Yolton, *Locke and French Materialism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991); and Aram Vartanian, “Quelques réflexions sur le concept d’âme dans la littérature clandestine,” in *Le matérialisme du XVIIIe siècle et la littérature clandestine*, ed. Olivier Bloch (Paris: Vrin, 1982), 149–65. For a helpful discussion of the difficulties of translating Locke into French, see Makari, *Soul Machine*, 216–17; see also John Hampton, “Les traductions françaises de Locke au XVIIIe siècle,” *Revue de littérature comparée* 29 (1955): 240–51; and Delphine Soulard, “Anglo-French Cultural Transmission: The Case of John Locke and the Huguenots,” *Historical Research* 85, no. 227 (2012): 105–32. On

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gions” (the errors of which Christians themselves occasionally made), Helvétius found the source of their “foolish credulity” invariably in the “the narrow mind [*l’esprit étroit*] of an individual.”⁶⁶ In order to combat this “greatest fanaticism,” he implored his readers “to examine the forces of the mind [and] to consider the picture of human follies.”⁶⁷ If it was in Locke that the modern category of religion was solidified, and thus Locke who bequeathed to the eighteenth century the task of making sense of religion’s interiority, it was also he who provided the tools to do so.⁶⁸

RELIGION PSYCHOLOGIZED

My claim thus far has been that the desire to show how interior religion became perverted gave impetus to the formulation of new theories of human powers, capacities, and tendencies, comprising the basics of a psychopathology and of an understanding of the inner workings of the mind. In other words, when “religion” came into being as a result of the fracturing of Christian hegemony, the making visible of Christianity as both itself fragmented and one among others, psychology emerged in its wake, as both that which gave religion cause (the excited imagination, fear/hope, a projection of inward disturbances, the troubled brain) and that with which true religion distinguished itself from its imitators.

This grave project of critiquing false religion generated a panoply of ideas about mental life: for instance, that it is *fragile* and *unruly*, must “provide some degree of stability and durability in the face of its divisions and discontinuities,” and is thus constantly prone to error and delusion;⁶⁹ that it is not

the critics of Lockean epistemology in eighteenth-century France, often orthodox believers (Lignac, Cochet, Hayer, Boullier, Roche, Monestier) who thought the sensationalists had explained away the active soul, see R. R. Palmer, *Catholics and Unbelievers in Eighteenth-Century France* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1939), chap. 6.

⁶⁶ Helvétius, *De l’esprit*, 170–71.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 214.

⁶⁸ Locke himself was prompted to write the *Essay* by the problem of “the principles of morality and revealed religion” (John C. Biddle, “Locke’s Critique of Innate Principles and Toland’s Deism,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 37, no. 3 [1976]: 411–22).

⁶⁹ Seigel, *Idea of the Self*, 93. Aping the freethinkers, George Berkeley presents the mind as prone to prejudice and absurdity through the mouth of Alciphron: “You must know, said he, that the mind of man may be fitly compared to a piece of land. What stubbing, ploughing, digging, and harrowing, is to the one; that thinking, reflecting, examining, is to the other. Each hath its proper culture; and as land is suffered to lie waste and wild for a long tract of time, will be overspread with brush-wood, brambles, thorns, and such vegetables which have neither use nor beauty; even so there will not fail to sprout up in a neglected uncultivated mind, a great number of prejudices and absurd opinions, which owe their origin partly to the soil itself, the passions and imperfections of the mind of man; and partly to those seeds which chance to be scattered in it by every wind of doctrine” (*Alciphron, or the Minute Philosopher in Seven Dialogues* [New Haven, CT: Sidney’s Press, for Increase Cooke & Co., 1803], 19–20). On the importance of the “metaphor of mixed land as itself a metaphor for the qualitative differentiation of the personality” in the seventeenth century, see Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 28.

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a given but the product of a particular *development* and thus can be arrested at particular developmental stages; that its opposing passions are very often fused together, so as to make a large domain of human emotional life *ambivalent*; that its overwhelming fears and anxieties can be *projected* onto the environment and thus that the world can be clothed with the contents of the mind; and that its highest highs and lowest lows are a function of the creative and dangerous power of the *imagination*. This list of features helps clarify why it is not the hypothesis of the *self* but that of the *mind* that is of interest here: what was being elucidated in many Enlightenment theories of religion was a kind of human action that involved motivations (anxiety, coupled passions, projection) that were not necessarily attended by the self's awareness of those motivations.⁷⁰

This is an essential point: while one might read the present article as contributing to the secularist history of the formation of the "bounded self," my concern throughout has not been with the self, the individual, privacy, or related concepts, but rather with the irksome *mind* and the activity of investigating it. Far from being the radiant core of the person, the mind was, for eighteenth-century psychologists of religion, a problem to be solved. Intellectuals and heart religionists alike desired a liberation from its "false images of perception" and "self-destructive pleasures."⁷¹ The emergence of the psychology of religion is thus less the history wherein the "I" came to occupy center stage in the western imaginary than it was one in which the mind came to be seen as a central obstacle to "a recovered space of communion."⁷² It is because so many people wanted to *transcend* the mind in its limitations that it received such committed inquiry.

It was not, however, only that the problem of religion gave rise to this new form of inquiry but also that the latter worked back on the former,⁷³ and in two particular ways: first, the attribution of false religion to mental pathology implicitly recast true religion in terms of mental health. This development can be seen in thinkers like Warburton and Wesley, who invoked the "natural workings of the mind" and "the spirit of a sound mind," respectively, to describe true religion. When Friedrich Schleiermacher later rescued religion from its "cultured despisers," he was not swinging "the pendulum back to the medieval emphasis on piety" so much as he was working to clarify in what way religion lay in the mind, so that it would be possible to fend off Enlightenment critics of religion while still distinguishing "a sound religion

⁷⁰ According to Jean A. Perkins, "the eighteenth century as a whole . . . had intimations of the existence of a strata of human experience which lies beyond the realm of consciousness" (*The Concept of the Self in the French Enlightenment* [Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1969], 112).

⁷¹ Picciotto, *Labors of Innocence*, 19, 268.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 9.

⁷³ Unsurprising, since "the very methods of the embryonic science of religion determined to a large extent what 'religion' was to be" (Harrison, "*Religion*" and the Religions in the English Enlightenment, 2).

from them that would be neither cold nor overenthused.”⁷⁴ The link between true religion and mental health had taken hold.

Second, psychology helped address the second “problematic” of religion: its plurality. As Peter Harrison explains, the natural historians of the seventeenth century understood religious pluralism as reflecting “not different sources of knowledge but rather the way in which different minds expressed the same truth in different ways.”⁷⁵ In their view, a priori religion finds unique expression through the particular environments in which it is manifest: according to Guy Stroumsa, “it was natural religion, permeating the multiplicity of rituals and beliefs, which retained the unity of humankind.”⁷⁶ As the natural history of religion developed in the eighteenth century, however, it no longer took natural religion to be its object but rather particular human qualities that generated religion.⁷⁷ In this new eighteenth-century view, religion had at its core not the same *truth* but rather the same *mental traits*.⁷⁸ Since everyone has a mind, a mind subject to delusion and vulnerable to a panoply of priestcrafts, but also one that can be cultivated to at least partially grasp truth, religion is, on the one hand, a universal, to be found among all human beings throughout history and in all parts of the world. On the other hand, since the minds of people who grow up in vastly different environments are shaped by those environments, leading to their own distinct associations of ideas, it is not simply that they improperly comport themselves to the divine but that they have an entirely different structure of beliefs from our own.⁷⁹ With Catherine Bell, I believe the recognition of real difference here “did in fact introduce the means for a rudimentary egalitarianism and relativism when viewing the diversity of religions,” even if that difference would be reified in claims about intellectual inequality between races and primitive mentality.⁸⁰

⁷⁴ Ibid., 173; Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, ed. Richard Crouter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 32.

⁷⁵ Harrison, “Religion” and the Religions in the English Enlightenment, 40.

⁷⁶ Stroumsa, *A New Science*, 11.

⁷⁷ Harrison, “Religion” and the Religions in the English Enlightenment, 163.

⁷⁸ In very general terms, it is true that “religion” appeared in “mental traits” (conscience, synderesis) for Bonaventure and Aquinas, but those mental traits cannot be separated, for them, from the truth. As H. E. Tödt explains, “in the pre-modern situation, the conscience never makes a judgment and the inwardness never unfolds apart from reference to the law of God (*lex dei*) and law of nature (*lex naturae*). All judging moves within the correlation of the conscience (inwardness) and the law of God. For the modern subjectivity, with its will to constitute itself out of its own resources and thus to constitute its own world, that cosmos of norms (the law of God) becomes a major problem” (“Towards a Theory of Making Ethical Judgments,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 6, no. 1 [1978]: 114).

⁷⁹ Here, as elsewhere, Locke was prescient: “The Americans are not all born with worse understandings than the Europeans, though we see none of them have such reaches in the arts and sciences. And among the children of a poor countryman, the lucky chance of education and getting into the world gives one infinitely the superiority in parts over the rest, who, continuing at home, had continued also just of the same size with his brethren” (John Locke, *Conduct of the Understanding*, ed. Thomas Fowler [Oxford: Clarendon, 1881], 22).

⁸⁰ Bell, “Paradigms,” 33. Jonathan Z. Smith similarly claims that the discovery of the Americas led to new polygenetic accounts of human diversity that resulted in “a complex vocabu-

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BUT WAS THERE PSYCHOLOGY IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY?

One might agree with the general argument thus far that it was in response to the problematic of the “interiority” of religion that crystallized at the end of the seventeenth century that new theories of the mind appeared in the eighteenth, and that these theories then in turn helped to define their object in its plurality, without being willing to admit that *psychology* as we know it was involved in this process. As Nikolas Rose and Graham Richards have both argued, while it may be fair to say that the eighteenth century’s “science of man” gave birth to the “mind,” “we cannot identify psychology simply with the emergence of such a theoretical object. Psychology consists not only in a set of theories, concepts, and models, but also in a set of procedures of observation, investigation and experimentation, which will elicit psychological facts and evidence and provide the testing ground for explanations through the effects which they produce.”⁸¹ It was from these practices, anchored in schools, clinics, and prisons and applied to persons deemed pathological and in need of regulation, that the discipline of psychology emerged. Before there were practices, subjects, and institutions, there were only theories, and theories do not make a discipline.

On the one hand, it is undeniable that the “whole technology” of “instruction, testing and assessment procedures, rules of diagnostic practice and classification, techniques of therapy and reformation” did not exist in the Enlightenment, nor did the common appellation “psychology” for the study of the mind.⁸² That being said, eighteenth-century psychology was not merely a collection of theories: like its nineteenth-century descendant, it too emerged along with new *practices*, new *subjects*, and new *institutions*. Fernando Vidal, who also finds it justified to speak of “eighteenth-century psychology,” emphasizes that Locke’s “way of ideas” “was both ontological and methodological”: in other words, it contained a certain conception of the mind at the same time that it laid out a way of investigating that mind that “abandoned a priori definitions and syllogistic deduction in favor of observation and experiment, by which the origin of ideas in sensation was demonstrated.”⁸³ The psychological theories of religion produced in the eighteenth century were *made possi-*

lary for describing and explaining difference, limited by the unfortunate eighteenth-century decision to correlate biological and cultural characteristics” (*Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004], 315). For a discussion of the contributions of eighteenth-century debates about the mind, and specifically that between Helvétius and Diderot, to new theories of racial inequality, see Ann Thomson, *Bodies of Thought: Science, Religion, and the Soul in the Early Enlightenment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 237–48. And for a helpful explanation of the dangers and promises inherent to the category of the “primitive,” see Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concept of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 2002), chap. 5.

⁸¹ Nikolas Rose, *The Psychological Complex: Psychology, Politics and Society in England, 1869–1939* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), 13.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 8.

⁸³ Vidal, *Sciences of the Soul*, 96.

ble by a methodological revolution, one that put metaphysical issues relating to substance on the back burner and privileged the “historical, plain method” of the Royal Society of London.⁸⁴ It may seem in retrospect to be commonsensical to base speculation about the inner workings of the mind on observation, but a methodological jettisoning of the metaphysical discourse on the rational soul had to occur before that was possible.⁸⁵

While agreeing with Rose on “the absence of psychology in the eighteenth century,” Graham Richards adds an interesting wrinkle to the claim that the Enlightenment theorization of the mind was rooted in a methodological shift: according to Richards, philosophers like Locke ascribed to a theory of language that self-reflexively acknowledged the rootedness of psychological theorizing in psychological processes. Though they did not bring this realization “to its logical conclusion,” they at least had a partial realization that observing the mind is not the same act as observing things in the world. For Richards, the irony is that “Psychology as a natural-scientific discipline could only emerge when their albeit partial insight had been lost sight of. Only when this latter condition had been met were Psychologists able to uninhibitedly engage in systematic physiomorphic exercises, believing themselves to be genuinely investigating an objectively existing ‘reality.’”⁸⁶ In other words, the birth of scientific psychology was predicated upon the repression of an important methodological insight that, I would argue, any responsible psychologist today would affirm.

In addition to a new method that enabled a new practice, eighteenth-century psychology also had new *subjects*. For Rose, the nineteenth-century “psychology of the individual was constituted around the pole of abnormality.”⁸⁷ “The feeble-minded individual, the shell-shocked soldier, the inefficient worker, the maladjusted child, the juvenile delinquent”—these were the subjects of the new “psychological complex.”⁸⁸ If the argument here has been correct, however, the eighteenth century also furnished new psychological subjects: the superstitious, the enthusiast, the fanatical, and so on. Putting down what was only common sense, Kant found it useful to mention in his *Anthropology* that “it is said, for example, that in religion the choleric is *orthodox*, the sanguine is *latitudinarian*, the melancholic is *enthusiast*, the phlegmatic is *indifferentist*.”⁸⁹ While rejecting “these tossed-off judgments, which

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 82. Though as Sarah Rivett has demonstrated, the “experimental religion” of the “radical Protestants, [who] applied the experimental method to witness, observe, and record the manifestations of grace on the souls of others” preceded experimental philosophy (*Science of the Soul*, 6).

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁸⁶ Graham Richards, “The Absence of Psychology in the Eighteenth Century: A Linguistic Perspective,” *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 23 (1992): 197.

⁸⁷ Rose, *Psychological Complex*, 5.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁸⁹ Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. and ed. Robert B. Loudon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 191.

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are worth as much for Characteristic as scurrilous wit allows them,” Kant himself, while explaining his categories of madness, claimed that “*superstition* is more comparable with dementia, *enthusiasm* with insania.”⁹⁰ Kant’s categories of mental illness do not look so different from those of Phillipe Pinel, the pioneer of the “moral treatment” who ushered in the age of asylum. The salience of the latter’s division of mental illness into four types (mania, melancholia, dementia, and idiocy), about which Rose admits “there was nothing original,” can only be understood by looking back to their religious counterparts in the eighteenth century.⁹¹ No less than nineteenth-century psychology did Enlightenment psychology seek “to establish itself by claiming its ability to deal with the problems posed for social apparatuses by dysfunctional conduct” as categorized in these classes, though sectarian violence and the manipulations of priestcraft were the focus.⁹²

The last claim here, that eighteenth-century psychology was born with new institutions, might seem to be the most difficult of the three: though there was a lucrative mad-doctoring trade in the eighteenth century,⁹³ there was nothing on the order of the asylum. The whole disciplinary system as Foucault outlines it in *Discipline and Punish* did not appear until the nineteenth century. But there was one key set of institutions that undergirded the psychology of religion in the eighteenth century: those associated with the emergence of the bourgeois public sphere. In Jürgen Habermas’s classic articulation, the public sphere, wherein citizens “confer in an unrestricted fashion—that is, with the guarantee of freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish their opinions—about matters of general interest,” first emerged at the end of the seventeenth century with the decline of feudal authorities.⁹⁴ As “the link to divine authority which the church represented, that is, religion, became a private matter . . . so-called religious freedom came to insure what was historically the first area of private autonomy,” and it was the mobilization of this autonomy toward rational-critical debate—as Habermas says, “the process of self-clarification of private people focusing on the genuine experiences of their novel privateness”—that was the great promise of the bourgeois public sphere.⁹⁵ While Habermas’s assumptions here—notably, that “a public com-

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁹¹ Rose, *Psychological Complex*, 33.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 5.

⁹³ See Scull, *Madness in Civilization*, 135.

⁹⁴ Jürgen Habermas, “The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article (1964),” *New German Critique* 3 (Autumn 1974): 49.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 51; Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 29. To be clear, this understanding of “the privatization of religion” does not imply “a corresponding secularization of the public sphere,” as Misty Anderson argues: both “secular and religious voices” took advantage of the new public sphere (*Imagining Methodism in 18th-Century Britain*, 23). The important point is that a novel conception of interiority, unfolded by *philosophes* and Methodists alike, served as its precondition.

posed of private people is a crucially *secular* phenomenon, predicated on the individual right of religious freedom”—might be questionable, he does make it clear that this debate, wherein nascent psychological theories of religion were first articulated, was not free-floating: it existed in coffee houses, salons, book clubs, subscription libraries, in letters, journals of art and cultural criticism, and moral weeklies.⁹⁶ These institutions were not exclusively devoted to the investigation of the mind, as Wundt’s laboratories later were, but this is not reason to devalue their influence here. What we call psychology today is the product of both academic and clinical institutions as well as those of the (structurally transformed) public sphere, and there is an unmistakable through line from the eighteenth-century psychology of religion to contemporary popular psychology and spirituality discourse.⁹⁷

Eighteenth-century psychology was thus far more than a “collection of theories,” but there is still the problem that most of the francophone and anglophone philosophers mentioned here did not identify themselves as involved in an enterprise known as “psychology” (Charles Bonnet was a notable exception), a term that for many “smacked of Scholasticism, of the clergy’s abstruse teachings, of unintelligible concepts with no real referent.”⁹⁸ In France, it was not until after the Bourbon Restoration that “psychology” “entered academic curricula . . . in the works of Maine de Biran, Pierre Laromiguière, Victor Cousin, and others, [characterized] by a spiritualist eclecticism critical of Enlightenment sensualism and the physiological orientation of someone like Cabanis.”⁹⁹ Psychology in the eighteenth century was nonetheless “perceived as being in a process of renewal and revival” and was increasingly demarcated by “its sensualist inclinations, its rejection of metaphysics as first science, its methodological self-awareness, and its notion of the human being as a composite of a soul and a body.”¹⁰⁰ Although a thoroughgoing nominalism prevents us from speaking of “eighteenth-century psychology,”¹⁰¹ it is with reason that nineteenth-century retrospective constructions of the history of psychology looked to the authors covered here.¹⁰² If we take psychology to be the study of the mind based in the observation of the myriad ways in which passions, desires, fears, and hopes obstruct clear perception and thinking, it is justifiable, with Vidal, to see their works as psy-

⁹⁶ Picciotto, *Labors of Innocence*, 5 (emphasis added).

⁹⁷ “Insight into the psychological strains created by [the experimentalist] epistemology can be gleaned from contemporary examples of what we would now call the literature of self-help” (ibid., 268).

⁹⁸ Vidal, *Sciences of the Soul*, 118. See Charles Bonnet, *Essai de Psychologie*, in *Oeuvres d’Histoire et de Philosophie de Charles Bonnet*, vol. 17 (Neuchâtel: Samuel Fauche, 1783).

⁹⁹ Vidal, *Sciences of the Soul*, 121.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 97.

¹⁰¹ A thoroughgoing nominalism would also prevent us from speaking of the industrial revolution in the 1780s; see Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution, 1789–1848* (New York: Vintage, 1996), 28.

¹⁰² Ibid., chap. 5.

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chological *avant la lettre*, even if they were not, like those of Christian Wolff, a ready-to-hand referent for the word in the eighteenth century.

CONCLUSION

In using new theories about the human mind to formulate their thoughts on the sources and problems of “interior” religion, eighteenth-century thinkers helped delimit the category of religion as a phenomenon distinct from but inclusive of Christianity, common to all people but particular to each culture, in psychological terms. The Enlightenment witnessed the progressive solidification of the link between false religion and mental pathology—and, by extension, true religion and a healthy mind—as both those friendly and those hostile to religion theorized the concept in reference to the strength, weakness, and peculiar attributes of the mind. This connection was firmly established by the time of Kant, who, in his course on anthropology, took the next step of relating the false prophet to the empirical psychologist (Mesmerism was making its way back to Germany around this time), thus further solidifying the link between religion and psychology.¹⁰³ It was also revalued by the early Romantics, who saw the very same imagination that the *philosophes* had decried as dangerous as the creative source of all aesthetic and religious achievements. While in many ways turning the Enlightenment on its head, the Romantics affirmed religion as an essentially psychological phenomenon. The eighteenth century thus bequeathed to the nineteenth a panoply of associations between religion and the mind, associations that would inform the rise of psychiatry and the formation of new quasi-religious movements such as spiritualism in America.¹⁰⁴

As I have indicated throughout, the story told here is not one about the straightforward march of the secular: for one, psychology did not emerge as a direct challenge to Christian doctrine, as a secular dismissal of religious excess, but rather as a form of inquiry adopted by renewers, defenders, and critics of the faith alike. Indeed, it was because the pursuit of psychology was taken up by opposed interests that it became a dominant mode of thinking, bearing such force that its impetus—the problem of religion—was reshaped in its own terms. Second, the birth of the mind did not coincide with the binding of true religion to the private self: both philosophers and heart religionists were attempting to free themselves of their personal limitations, to get past the trappings of having a human mind, in order to pursue rational inquiry in the one case and in order to commune with God on the other. The mind was the heir to the soul but also to the

¹⁰³ Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*.

¹⁰⁴ See Jan Goldstein, *Console and Classify: The French Psychiatric Profession in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), chaps. 3, 6; Adam Crabtree, *From Mesmer to Freud: Magnetic Sleep and the Roots of Psychological Healing* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), chaps. 9–12.

“seemingly impenetrable ‘mist’ upon human understanding . . . a repeated trope in the Bible, functioning as a continual reminder of the barriers to revelation in a fallen world.”¹⁰⁵

The “religion in the mind” model is, as many scholars have argued, ideological, in the sense that it both contorts our understanding of religion at the same time that it serves power, and notably secular forms of governance. I hope to have demonstrated in this article that eighteenth-century psychology—the activity of observation and introspection practiced in correspondence through the institutions of the emerging public sphere that produced new theories of the mind (of projection, ambivalence, the imagination, etc.)—was, like bourgeois culture in general for Habermas, “not mere ideology.”¹⁰⁶ It expressed the views of people newly freed from traditional authorities but not yet subsumed (in the real rather than formal sense) to the logic of capital, and aimed to overcome previously unthematized human errors and limitations by making them explicit and tracing their etiology. Like the free, creative individuality that represented the bourgeois ideal, psychology was undermined by the very conditions that gave birth to it, transformed along with the public sphere into a practice of affirming what already exists anyways. It nonetheless bears a promise that is not so casually transcended.

From a disciplinary perspective, while there is good reason today to be suspicious of the eighteenth-century view of religion, of the psychological study of religion, and of the idea that religion lies somewhere in the mind, we might also wonder whether those suspicions are part of a more general suspicion about the adequacy and legitimacy of the concept of religion itself and, thus, whether religion is really a coherent category absent a psychological reference. The coincidence of increasingly critical views of the concept of religion with the demise of the psychology of religion, and of ideas about the mind more generally, would support this line of thought. While this article could thus be thought of as an attempt to understand when and how the category of religion took on the “mentalist” bias that contemporary scholars of religion so lament, it could also be seen as raising the question of whether these scholars simply want religion to be something it is not.

Looking back on the eighteenth century, G.W. F. Hegel claims in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* that the Enlightenment’s attack on faith, which reveals that “the absolute Being of faith is a Being of the believer’s own consciousness *qua* a self, or that this absolute Being is a *product* of consciousness,” did not eliminate faith but dialectically fused it with the activity of Enlightenment.¹⁰⁷ Though we might question his view that faith “collapse[d] into a

¹⁰⁵ Rivett, *Science of the Soul*, 15.

¹⁰⁶ Habermas, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 160.

¹⁰⁷ G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 345.

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state in which it moves listlessly to and fro within itself,” becoming the “sheer yearning” of “unsatisfied Enlightenment,” Hegel was right to think that the Enlightenment critique of superstition and enthusiasm was not destructive but rather unwittingly productive of a new form of “religion” and that this new form shared a secret affinity with the activity that produced it.¹⁰⁸ Whether we understand the “psychologization” of religion as a dialectical fusion holding great promise for both Enlightenment and faith, as Hegel did, or as a lamentable turn that ought to be undone, as many contemporary scholars of religion do, our understandings of both “religion” and “psychology” are bolstered in attending to their co-delimitation in the eighteenth century.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 349.